

LWG NASCA Webinar 5/28/14

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IL is a leader in corn and soybeans. We have 27 million land acres and agriculture utilizes 75% of our land area. Of our agricultural area, 89% of it is Prime Farmland Soil. We have 97 Soil and Water Conservation Districts in our state.

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To prepare for this presentation, I answered the below questions for my county and I also surveyed the other 96 Districts in IL. I received a total of 42 responses.

1. Things that are working well and why (successes) for LWG in my state
 - Invite a diverse group to attend the meeting (i.e. municipalities, township road commissioners, Hwy department, county board, land contractors, etc.)
 - Let group brainstorm resource concerns.
 - Using a large flipchart to write concerns on, go around the room in order and ask each participant for ONE concern. Snake back through room until everyone has exhausted their concerns list.
 - Compile like concerns with input of participants to ensure that that is acceptable.
 - Have participants rank their top five compiled concerns on the large flipchart.
 - Total the rankings to see which concerns are “most popular”
 - **How often** - Most IL SWCDs conduct LWG Mtgs intermittently as NRCS requests (2-3 years, 5 years, etc.)
 - **Gain Attendees** - Some offices send an invitation (and/or a survey, and/or talk to LWG members individually) to gain responses. Have partners attend.
 - **When hold Mtgs** – Have a stand-alone meeting. In IL, some offices hold LWG mtg with Annual mtg or Board Mtgs, with County Fair. Some offer a meal/food.
 - **Info used for** APOW, Long Range Planning, Apply for Funding/Grants, watershed committee formation, establishing priority areas within the county
2. Things that are not working well (failures) and your related recommendations for improvement to change, revitalize, and/or build capacity of your LWG.

- Participant turn-out could be improved – possibly utilize follow-up reminders to group, phone, email, mail. Perhaps offer a meal. Invite more landowners along with the above-listed groups.
- Group facilitator seemed to skew participants concerns and not consider some concerns that did not seem to “fit the mold”. This obviously negatively influenced participant’s input to the process. Get a neutral 3rd-party meeting facilitator.
- More result follow-up from National. The local level is not seeing evidence of NRCS utilizing the LWG input from meeting to meeting (annually). This needs to be more apparent. Especially when EQIP focuses on livestock only. At the local level- Districts can pass out APOW to show LWG that their concerns make a difference locally.
- Public looks to staff for direction during the information gathering